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SIPDIS

PASS USTR FOR ALLGEIER AND DWOSKIN
EB/OT FOR CRAFT
USDA FOR FAS/ITP/SHEIKH, MTND/HENKE
USDOC FOR ITA/JACOBS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEETING OF THE WTO GENERAL COUNCIL - MARCH 31, 2005

1. The General Council agreed on March 31, 2005 to extend by three months (until July 30, 2005) the time period for Members to negotiate compensation or withdraw concessions of their own in response to the EC's withdrawal of concessions as a result of EU enlargement to its new membership of 25. The meeting was short and transpired as expected, with the General Council taking note of the EC's communication in G/L/695/Add.1/Rev.1 and adopting the decision reached in the Council for Trade in Goods on March 11, in which Members agreed to extend to fifteen months the time period for Members that previously submitted a claim for compensatory adjustment under Article XXIV:6 to withdraw substantially equivalent concessions under Article XXVIII:3, on the understanding that Members in need of a further extension may raise the matter again at the May session of the Council for Trade in Goods.

2. Two delegations - the Philippines and Indonesia - took the floor to express concern that only "affected Members" were covered by the scope of the EC communication. They expressed "systemic concerns" about the process being used to withdraw concessions, with the Philippines referring to its statements made at the October 20, 2004 meeting of the General Council and the October 1, 2004 meeting of the Council for Trade in Goods. Both representatives emphasized that the General Council decision has no legal effect on the rights and obligations of Members apart from extending the deadline for rebalancing commitments as set out in the EC communication.

3. The next General Council meeting is set for May 26-27, 2005, with an airgram on or about May 12. Deily